

apexart

2017-18 Unsolicited Exhibition Proposal by
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Light in Wartime

Artists: Nidaa Badwan, Richard Mosse, Patrick Willocq, Shirley Wegner, David Levinthal, Hashem Al Madani, Nilu Izadi, Lamia Joreige, Jo Ractliffe, Vartan Avakian

Growing up in the context of the Lebanese civil war, my childhood memories are fragments of extraordinary and ordinary scenes, collaged together: Faded signs, pockmarked buildings, endless traffic jams at innumerable checkpoints, Arabic coffee and Marlboro cigarettes, the darkness of nights with no electricity, flickering grainy TVs blasting the evening News, battery powered pocket radios, black-out candles and long cast shadows, the smell of kerosene lamps, flashlights, and the sounds of metallic thunder.

Light in wartime is a precarious thing. Bill Brandt conjured the wartime city on blackout nights, as he rambled down the darkened familiar avenues made suddenly strange - a darkened town lit only by moonlight, and darkness as the ordinary condition of the world. The Syrian poet Adonis, wrote of this mystical light of darkness and darkness of light in his poem 'candlelight', that he encountered living in a city under siege, which allowed him to create an intimate relationship with darkness. This exhibition explores wartime 'light', metaphorically and technically, in the context of photography.

As darkness falls, and bombs light up the night sky, the domestic space provides protection against the outside world, yet becomes a target of the conflict and part of its operational weaponry as displayed in the work of Nilu Izadi. Izadi utilizes the bullet holes on Beirut's historic landmark Yellow House as apertures for an actual camera obscura. With one bullet hole and a darkened room, she transformed the house into a camera obscura. Lamia Joreige reenacts the notorious sniper's line of sight through pinhole camera views to envision the sniper's perspective of the city. Vartan Avakian prints the silver particles of film debris found in the dust of a war-torn building, into photographs.

In war-time, one's mind and imagination becomes a place of refuge from the imploding universe. Photographers such as David Levinthal, Hashem Al Madani, Nidaa Badwan, Shirley Wegner, expose the sense of play inherent to lives entangled in the theater of war, where the studio, 'spotlight' moment, becomes a site for escape, creativity, and reflection.

The aftermath of destruction in wartime is a strange mix of the extraordinary and ordinary. Richard Mosse, Jo Ractliffe and Patrick Willocq, reflect on the beauty and tragedy of War. Mosse's uses infrared film to capture a surreal vision of the war-torn Congolese landscapes, questioning the representation of war and the construction of photography. Willocq recreates war-children's drawings into 3d Tableaus. Jo Ractliffe tells tales of war and conflict through bland-scapes devoid of humans. Photography is used reflexively in order to question the ways in which war photography is constructed.

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